



## THE MAYOR'S OFFICE ON AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES

### ADDRESSING CITIZENS' CONCERNS

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#### 2012 Let's Move Accessibility Festival

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**The Colors of Fall are Here**



The City of Birmingham Mayor's Office on ADA, in conjunction with the Downtown YMCA Youth Center, and a myriad of participating agencies and sponsors, came together to host, what was the 1st Annual 'Let's Move Disability Festival' on August 25, 2012. This fun filled event was inspired by the "Let's Move" program, developed by First Lady, Michelle Obama to help fight childhood obesity. While continuing to encourage the same healthy lifestyle through fun activities and healthy eating habits, this event was centered around the inclusion of children with disabilities and their 'non-disabled peers.

The participants engaged in activities such as line dancing and adaptive tennis, wheelchair basketball, and adaptive aquatics. The YMCA Youth Center's focus is on youth up to age 13 and was the perfect venue for the event. One of few fully accessible facilities with an accessible swimming pool with a zero entry ramp that gradually slopes into the water, children with physical and other mobility issues found no barrier to accessing the pool. The Lakeshore Foundation professional aquatic staff and the City of Birmingham Parks and Recreation lifeguards were on hand to assist. Para Olympians from Lakeshore also demonstrated a few wheelchair basketball techniques. A huge thanks to Home Depot for provided builder workshop and kits and their entire staff of volunteers. Because this event promoted healthy eating habits as well as healthy activities, Marino's Groceries and the Finley Avenue Farmer's Market deserve a big thanks for providing a variety of healthy foods and snacks; the Jefferson County Health Department, and other agencies also set up information booths.

Special thanks to all participants, sponsors, and volunteers who helped make the first 'Let's Move Disability Festival' as success.

## Addressing Citizens' Concerns

### TOPSoccer; Accessible Soccer for Kids With Disabilities



TOPSoccer, a very unique soccer program, is specially designed for kids with all kinds of disabilities. Participating kids will play four soccer matches that will end with a championship match. This specialized youth soccer league will not only teach special needs kids about soccer and sportsmanship, but most importantly, with the help of teamwork combined with the fun of soccer, it teaches kids how to overcome adversity despite any disability.

Hearing the idea from a friend in Maryland, Taylor Smith, the person who started the Birmingham

TOPSoccer league, simply thought that kids with dis-

abilities would enjoy and benefit from this sport. When asked about TOPSoccer, Smith simply stated: "all I did was take the game of soccer and made it adaptive and accessible." Because all the participating kids have physical or mental disability, they are paired up with a partner, or "sidekick," who assist them with any help they might need on the field. Aside from this difference, the same rules apply and the game is played the same. However, with TOPSoccer, "the sheer joy of watching a child with a disability that's never played any sport score a goal just adds to the level of excitement from the kids and the parents. This league is in a class all its own," said Smith.

Kids must be between the ages of 5—21 with a nominal fee of \$30. All TOPSoccer games and practices are held at The SportsBlast Complex located on Hwy 280 in Birmingham. For all information on spring and fall TOPSoccer leagues, or on volunteering to becoming a sidekick or a coach, please contact Taylor Smith by phone at: (205) 902-3478, or by email at:

[topsoccer@birminghamunited.com](mailto:topsoccer@birminghamunited.com).

### Disability Rights and Resources Grand Opening



On Wednesday, August 29, 2012, the ribbon was cut and the doors were open for the brand new home of the Disability Rights and Resource Center, formally the Independent Living Resource Center. For a facility that does so much for the rights of the citizens in the disabled community, it's quite fitting that their new location is housed in the center of Birmingham's Civil Rights District. Their mission statement reads, "Our goal is to help people make decisions for themselves and change the community's perception of people with disabilities."

The new building that has been built to the standards of a barrier free "Universal Design." This means that the entire building is easily accessible and has considered all disabilities. In essence, no matter what the disability, one can feel a sense of independence because of its maneuverability. This is especially important because the Disability Rights and Resource Center is seen as a one stop information center that caters to the entire disabled community. Mayor William Bell and the Mayor's Office on Americans with Disabilities recognized the Disability Rights and Resource Center this year as the **2012 recipient of The City of Birmingham's Accessibility Award** for universal design.



## Mayor Presents 2012 ADA Awareness Awards



Every two years the City of Birmingham recognizes both businesses and individuals that go that extra mile to insure accessibility for all. the "Above and Beyond" award is issued to businesses that display their willingness to provide access so that the public, disabled or not, can maneuver the facility with ease. The 2012 "Above and Beyond" award was given to the Disability Rights and Resource Center and the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind.

Disability Rights and Resources works to equip the disabled community with the resources and tools needed to be independent and connected within the community. This non-profit organization, formerly known as, "Independent Living Resources of Greater Birmingham," changed its

name in the spring of this year to the "Disability Rights and Resources" in an effort to better personify the advocacy and outreach that this entity provides. This award was accepted by Mr. Dan Kessler, the Executive Director of Disability Rights and Resources. Seen in the top left photo, from left to right is: Dan Kessler, Director of Disability Rights and Resources, Bill Hecker, Architect and building designer, and Mayor William A. Bell Sr.



The Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind, Birmingham Regional Center, assists families with disabled children and others who are visually and hearing disabled. From ages 3 to 21, the AIDB helps to find their students the assistance that they need to cope and live in a world often guided and directed by sight and sound. The award was accepted by Mr. Larscene Turk, Director of the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind. From left to right: Mr. Larscene Turk and Mayor William A. Bell, Sr.

The "Miriam Witherspoon Award," is given to an individual who exhibits a willful dedication to insuring accessibility. The award for 2012 went to Mr. John "Butch" Ferrell. Mr. Ferrell can be seen in the photo to the right. From left to right: Mr. John "Butch" Ferrell, Mrs. Claraetha Finley (Mother of the late Councilwoman Miriam Witherspoon), and Mayor William A Bell, Sr.



All three award winners were honored because they set an example for their continuous push for accessibility throughout the City of Birmingham. It should be our personal responsibility to work alongside these individuals to make Birmingham a model for other cities to imitate.

**We are on the web!**

**Mayor's Office On  
American with Disabilities**

**How to contact us:**

Linda Coleman, ADA Director

E-mail: [linda.coleman@birminghamal.gov](mailto:linda.coleman@birminghamal.gov)

Phone: 205-254-2079

Rudy Roussel, Jr., ADA Project Coordinator

E-mail: [rudy.roussel@birminghamal.gov](mailto:rudy.roussel@birminghamal.gov)

Phone: 205- 297-8013

Bacarra Mauldin, Administrative Assistant to the Mayor

E-mail: [bacarra.mauldin@birminghamal.gov](mailto:bacarra.mauldin@birminghamal.gov)

Phone: 205-714-8683

Fax: 205-254-2926

[www.birminghamal.gov](http://www.birminghamal.gov)

**The ADA Committee meets every  
Second Friday, 10:00 AM 2nd Floor  
City Hall Rm. 215**



## **ADA Advisory Committee**

Chair – John Duplessis—SSTE Employment Program

Vice Chair - Lorne Kelly—MAX Transit (VIP Para transit)

Secretary– Vacant

### **Committee Members**

Xaveria Anderson - Ms. Wheelchair Alabama 2007

Trisston Burrows - Ms. Wheelchair America/Alabama 2005

Twanna Carter -VA Medical Center

Dan Kessler, Director- Disability Rights and Resources

Charles Priest - Director, Alabama Head Injury Foundation

Alice Sanders -United Cerebral Palsy

Graham Sisson– Governor's Office on Disabilities (GOOD)

Yolanda Spencer- Alabama Department of Rehab Services

Myra Shamburger- Alabama Department of Rehab Services

Maria Lyas-Young - Birmingham City Schools

Peggy Turner – The Lakeshore Foundation

## **13th Annual Community Awareness Day**

The Jefferson County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) will be hosting their 13th Annual Community Awareness Day Thursday October 4, 2012 in Birmingham's Linn Park from 9:00am until 2:00pm. This yearly event is held to promote proper ways to prepare for a disaster. The event will feature a number of booths around the park that contain a wide range of information from organizations and agencies in Jefferson County to inform the public about emergency preparedness and what individuals can do to better prepare.

EMA will show attendees how to develop a personal emergency disaster kit and what one might need to include in their kit in case of an unexpected emergency. The City of Birmingham's Fire Department will have a booth to give away free smoke detectors along with fire safety instructions. There will also be a booth with local TV weather personalities who will be handing out weather radios. Persons who are disabled are encouraged to complete an EMA Disability Alert System's form to be added to an alert databank. This system is set up to warn any individuals with a disability of an oncoming emergency situation so they can properly prepare or activate their disaster plan. Free refreshments and great prizes along with activities will make this year's Community Awareness Day very informative as well as a fun learning experience.

